

Paul Hollister

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\$5,000 WINNER
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Growing up, I lived out in the country with my family and I had no friends. At home, I had my siblings, but no other kids to play with. I felt lonely and played on my own for the most part. I was a big kid, so I felt very self-conscious. We were pretty poor and didn't eat well: it was mac and cheese, pizza, and hotdogs. When I graduated high school, I weighed 275 pounds.

As an adult, I always felt self-conscious.

I'm 32 now, I live with three friends and their dad. I'm very happy and feel more at home than I ever have. But recently, I lost a good friend in a car accident. It was pretty rough, and I realized you never know how long you have and I wanted to get the most out of life and improve my lifestyle. At work, my fellow associate Kevin Lowe talked a lot about how the Thrive Challenge helped him, so I got started.

I started hiking with my friend and roommate, Carrie.

She's in the army and is in really good shape, so she motivates me. It's awesome having that accountability. We encourage each other to get outdoors and play softball. I'll knock on her door and see if she wants to go for a jog or to the gym. I'm also moving a lot at work, pushing carts around. I get at least 30 thousand steps a day!

I cut out fast food and drink a lot of water.

I'll have a salad or a turkey wrap with spinach for lunch. For dinner, I'll season chicken and bake it. I'm not a huge veggie person, but I do like broccoli and carrots. And I love fruit, like apples, bananas and peaches. My roommates and I cook together on Sundays. We'll make lasagna or spaghetti with meatballs and sit at the table, then we'll play card games like Red Flags.

I stopped playing video games.

I'd spend hours in my room, and it was an addiction. I didn't like the way I felt and I never had time to do anything else — I sold my games and my system and now I connect more with friends.

My roommates and I sit in a circle and tell each other what we are going through.

We're trying to support each other because life can get very hard. One person deals with addiction and talked about that. I brought up how I felt neglected by two people in the house who are in relationships and I was worried that they wouldn't include me in their lives anymore. They said they understood and we agreed to have these conversations regularly. It's a real community in our house — I want to stay here forever!



My passion is music, I love going to concerts and festivals

I'm into heavy metal — it helps to relax me and feel good. I love The Devil Wears Prada and Amon Amarth. I just went to an Ice Nine Kills concert in Rochester with Ashley, my concert buddy, and a few other friends who are co-workers.

At work, we push each other to keep going.

We have pictures in the break room of everyone who's won the Thrive Challenge. I've lost 70 pounds in the past year or so and I feel much better.

Saving money is a priority.

I'm budgeting and putting cash from every paycheck into a lock box and I'm watching the money grow. I'm still going to concerts, but spending less on merch. At the Ice Nine Kills concert I went to, I only bought the hoodie — no hat or anything else. I'm saving for trips and festivals. I want to go to the Blue Ridge Rock Festival in Virginia next September.

My family is important and I spend time with my sister, Christina, and her three kids.

I've become a better uncle. I play games with them, and we kick a ball together. I'll play Legos with my nine-year-old nephew, Darrius.

I have more energy, I love my life, and I have friends now.

I know I can be myself. I like myself way more, and I'm living in the moment.



THRIVE